



Washington, D. C. 20505

28 November 1977

Honorable Edward P. Boland, Chairman  
Permanent Select Committee  
on Intelligence  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am sure you are aware that the President is very concerned about the widespread dissemination of sensitive intelligence and is studying measures to reduce the number of people exposed to such information. The purpose of this letter is to acquaint you with some problems we are facing with regard to dissemination of sensitive intelligence information in compartmented categories and to ask your support for the policies I am following in this matter.

On several occasions during this past year I have been asked by Members of Congress to grant clearances for access to compartmented information to employees of their personal staffs. On all such occasions I have followed our established policy of granting compartmented access clearances only to permanent staff members of Congressional committees which have a jurisdictional interest in such matters. Were I not to follow this established procedure, the number of potential persons who could be given access to compartmented information would be formidable, given the fact that there are 535 Members of Congress. The problem has been complicated in the Senate somewhat by the concept of staff designees which permits a Member to designate a member of his personal staff to assist him in his work on a specific committee and authorizes the funds to pay that staff member. With the concurrence of the committee concerned, we have treated such individuals as personal staff members, rather than as committee staff.

There are good reasons for granting compartmented access only to staff members of the Congressional committees having a need for access to such sensitive intelligence information. The chairman of a particular committee is in the best position to determine a staff member's actual need to know which is the basic principle governing access to information even though a person possesses a particular clearance. Also, committees have established rules and procedures for handling and storage of compartmented information which personal offices of Members of Congress do not have. In addition, a committee staff member is subject to committee discipline for violation of such rules and procedures.

These reasons, in addition to the sheer number of persons who could obtain compartmented information were we to grant such clearances to members of personal staffs, lead me to the conclusion that I must continue the established procedures. You might be interested to know that the limitations I have placed on compartmented access do not apply only to Congress. I have recently frozen the number of such clearances within the Executive Branch and expect soon to issue instructions for net reductions.

I am sure you can understand the concerns I have outlined above. We will continue to study this matter and, in the event a change in our established policy is dictated, I will certainly notify you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Stansfield Turner", written over a horizontal line.

STANSFIELD TURNER